ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDANCE

Hazrat Ali (as) Letter To Governor Malik-e-Ashtar

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Preface

Oppression and injustice is the order of the day in today's world. The situation has been turned so grave, the world scenario at times creates a fear that this beautiful world which God has decorated for his creatures might turn into a scene of perdition before Doomsday. And for this state of affairs the responsibility would lie more on the rulers than the ruled. Yet, a ruler among the past rulers, whose period of reign was less than five years (36AH to 40AH) has ruled the state with Islamic justice. That great person was none other than Amir-ul-momineen Khalifa-tul muslimeen Hazrat Ali(a.s).Though known as khalifa-tul-Muslimeen, yet he was so kind on other communities as well, that after his martyrdom even poor Jew and Christian women residing in Kufa, were seen

crying. On being asked by those who were surprised at their mourning they replied that he was that kind person who used to bring food and other essentials to their houses in the darkness of night. So too, is his previous advice that: ***"Lead such a life that when you are alive people long for you and when you die they weep for you."*** (Nahjul Balaghah)

Those who commit the crime of dividing people on the basis of cast, community and religion should heed the above mentioned way of justice. Amirul Momineen Hazrat Ali(a.s) in one of his sermons said: ***"By Allah, I would rather pass a night in wakefulness on the thorns of as-sa'dan (a plant having sharp prickles) or be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allah and his Messenger on the date of the Judgment as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of***

anything out of worldly wealth. And how can I oppress anyone for the sake of a self that is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time."

"By Allah, I certainly saw Aqueel (my brother) fallen in destitution and he asked me three kilos more out of your (public) share of wheat, and I also saw his children with disheveled hair and dusty countenance due to starvation. As though their faces had been blackened by Indigo. He came to me several times and repeated his request again and again. I heard him......he thought that I was going to meet his demand. Then I heated a piece of Iron and took it near his body so that he might take a lesson from it, then he cried as a person in protracted illness cries in pain and he was about to get burnt with its branding. Then I said to him:

"moaning women may moan over you, O' my brother Aqueel; Do you cry on account of this heated iron rod which has been made by a man for fun, while you are driving me towards the fire of hell which Allah, the Almighty, has prepared for his wrath? Should you cry for worldly pain, I should not for the heated flames of Hell?"

Hazrat Ali(a.s) told another strange incident : "One day a man (Ash'as ibn Qays) came to me in the night with a closed flask, full of halwa with honey but I disliked it as though it was the saliva of a serpent or its vomit. I asked him whether it was a reward or zakaat (poor-tax) or charity, for those are forbidden to us members of the Prophet's family. He said it was neither this nor that but a present for you (ordinarily bribe is called a present or gift). Hazrat Ali(a.s) firmly decried him,: ***'May***

God curse on you, children and women weep on you, you came to deviate me from the religion of Allah, or have you gone mad, or are you speaking without sense?"

Then he says in his sermon that :

"By Allah, even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from the mouth of an ant, I would not do it. For me your world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of locust that is chewing it. What has Ali to do with bounties that will pass away and pleasure that will not last? I do seek protection of Allah from the slip of wisdom and the evils of mistakes, and from Him I seek succour. (Nahjul Balaghah sermon 224)

The character of Hazrat Aqueel is resplendent like the sun. Most probably his demand was just to acquaint people about Amirul Momineen's way of justice. On one hand Hazrat Ali(a.s) was to pursue Islamic justice and on the other hand he had to show compassion for a destitute brother. Therefore he assisted him from his own share and showed the world the way of avoiding the curse of apathy. While his own condition was that he was wearing a very thin cotton garment in the capital of Kufa in winter and when asked by a person replied that " this is the same dress which I had brought with me from Madina. I had not usurped anything from your Baitul Maal(government treasury)." This utterance is a slap on the face of those who swindle money from banks and government treasury and abscond

and deposit ill-gotten huge amounts of money in their overseas accounts.

Amirul Momineen Hazrat Ali(a.s) by his justice, way of governance, his letters, sermons and sayings warned the world and especially the rulers that if they refrain from justice and equality on account of their mental and emotional prejudice, enimity and personal expediencies and private benefits then they will be held as criminals of humanity whom neither history will pardon nor the creator will ever pardon. One day the burden of their oppressive misdeeds will fall on their heads which is the necessary outcome as evidenced by a long history, they will find nobody to listen to their supplication.

When a poetic competition for praising Hazrat Ali(a.s) just for amusement was organized

in the court of the Ruler of Shaam (Syria), this verse by Amr-e- Aas was found to be the best:

" والفضل بما ...."***(Real greatness is only that which is acknowledged even by enemies)***

Looking through the glasses of justice even non Muslims have appreciated the impeccable justice of Hazrat Ali(a.s). Famous Christian writer George Jordac of Lebanon wrote a book in Arabic in five volumes 'The Voice of Human Justice' (Sautul adalat ul Insania). The second editor of Islah Magazine Late Maulana Syed Mohammad Baqir Naqvi translated it in Urdu in one volume and called it 'Nida e Adalat e Insani' whose several editions have been published and sold out by Idara-e-Islah.

This sentence of George Jordac is worth being written in golden letters that: ***"Ali was***

martyred in Kufa mosque due to his excessive justice' (the Voice of Human Justice).” In the light of the above reality how meaningful become the utterance of Amir al Momineen after he was assaulted with sword that, "By the God of Kaaba I have succeeded."

Today those who win elections and become power hoppers, pass insulting remarks against those who are defeated and at times become so vehement that they get their opponents killed. Hazrat Ali(a.s) made it amply clear by this sentence that winning or losing an election is not the true standard of success. Real success is that the person who become ruler should not deviate from the path of equality and justice till his last breath. This is the real success and that is why Amir ul Momineen announced his success that though he was being

martyred but during the entire period of rule he had not done a single thing which was against equity and justice.

In a huge congregation Hazrat Ali(a.s.) asked whether amongst them there was anyone who remained hungry or without clothes in his reign ? Not one among them spoke. Once, someone set his slave free because of his old age and deprived him of food. Seeing the pitiable condition of that Christian slave Amir ul Momineen was very unhappy. Angrily he said: ***"You kept him till he was able to work and when he became old and weak you left him for begging. I cannot tolerate this. From this day his allowance would be paid from the government treasury."***

This is the real justice that no preferential treatment was shown to his own brother 'Aqeel and

thus the rulers of world were taught a lesson that it is dishonesty to squander money from government treasury on relatives, friends and acquaintances. Indeed, the real honesty is that if an old Christian is destitute he should not deprived from government's assistance. Will the governments of the world which are guilty of prejudice on the basis of caste and religion in the distribution of government aid learn from Hazrat Ali's way of governance ?

The unjust and oppressive rulers deprived our Imams(a.s) from government. The first Imam Hazrat Ali (a.s) got a chance to rule only after a lot of damage has already been done. Then he kindled the candle of justice in such a way that the world can draw light according to its own capacity even today. A famous couplet goes that: ***"Learn and learn again from Ali (a.s) how to run the world."***

Do celebrate 13 Rajab the birthday of Hazrat Ali(a.s) in a great manner. Express joy, offer 'nazr', organize happy gatherings and hold eulogies but also spend reasonable amount of money on publishing his instructions on the subject of equity and justice in Urdu, Hindi and English and other languages prevalent in our country and distribute the same to common people, government officers and rulers. With this wish that the clouds of oppression and injustice disappear and the sun of peace may shine bright. Terrorism in this world ends and those who are responsible for spreading the curse of terrorism may get the punishment they deserve.

Amir al Momineen Hazrat Ali's matchless letter addressed to the nominated Governor of Egypt Maalik e Ashtar has been published by

Idara-e-Islah Lucknow on the occasion of the birthday of Amir al Momineen Imam Ali(a.s) as a humble offering to God with the prayer that May Allah, for the sake of Mohammad(p.b.u.h) and members of his family(a.s), continues to bestow our organization with his blessings and succour, so that we may continue our good work.

Syed Mohammad Jabir Jaurasi
Idara-e-Islah Lucknow
20, Jamadi-ul-Akhir 1439AH, Friday9th March, 2018
1379Shahadate Husaini
{years since the martyrdom of Imam Husain (a. s)}

Amir- ul-Momineen Hazrat Ali’s

Letter To Malik-e-Ashtar

Written for Malik-e-Ashtar al-Nakha'i, when the position of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr had become precarious, and Amir al-mu'minin had appointed Malik-e-Ashtar as the Governor of Egypt and the surrounding areas; it is the longest document and contains the greatest number of beautiful sayings :

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

This is what Allah's servant Ali, Amir al-mu'minin, has ordered Malik ibn al-Haris al-Ashtar in his instrument (of appointment) for him when he

made him Governor of Egypt for the collection of revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people and making its cities prosperous.

He has ordered him to fear Allah, to prefer obedience to Him, and to follow what He has commanded in His Book (Qur'an) out of His obligatory and elective commands, without following which one cannot achieve virtue, nor (can one) be evil save by opposing them and ignoring them, and to help Allah the Glorified, with his heart, hand and tongue, because Allah whose name is Sublime takes the responsibility for helping him who helps Him, and for protecting him who gives Him support. He also orders him to break his heart off from passions, and to restrain it at the time of their increase, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allah has mercy.

The Qualifications of a Governor and his Responsibilities

Then, know, O Malik, that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they (people) will criticize you as you criticized them (rulers). Surely, the virtuous are known by the reputation that Allah circulates for them through the tongues of His creatures. Therefore, the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds. So, control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes.

Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation. They will commit slips and encounter mistakes. They may act wrongly, willfully or by neglect. So, extend to them your forgiveness and pardon, in the same way as you would like Allah to extend His forgiveness and pardon to you, because you are over them and your responsible Commander (Imam) is over you while Allah is over him who has appointed you. He (Allah) has sought you to manage their affairs and has tried you through them.

Do not set yourself to fight Allah because you have no power before His power and you

cannot do without His pardon and mercy. Do not repent of forgiving or be merciful in punishing. Do not act hastily during anger if you can find way out of it. Do not say: ***"I have been given authority, I should be obeyed when I order,"*** because it engenders confusion in the heart, weakens the religion and takes one near ruin. If the authority in which you are placed produces pride or vanity in you then look at the greatness of the realm of Allah over you and His might the like of which might you do not even possess over yourself. This will curb your haughtiness, cure you of your high temper and bring back to you your wisdom which had gone away from you.

Beware of comparing yourself to Allah in His greatness or likening yourself to Him in His

power, for Allah humiliates every claimant of power and disgraces every-one who is haughty.

Do justice for Allah and do justice towards the people, as against yourself, your near ones and those of your subjects for whom you have a liking because if you do not do so you will be oppressive, and when a person oppresses the creatures of Allah then, instead of His creatures, Allah becomes his opponent, and when Allah is the opponent of a person He tramples his plea; and he will remain in the position of being at war with Allah until he gives it up and repents. Nothing is more inductive of the reversal of Allah's bounty or for the hastening of His retribution than continuance in oppression, because Allah hears the prayer of the oppressed and is on the look-out for the oppressors.

Ruling should be in favor of the people as a whole

The way most coveted by you should be that which is the most equitable for the right, the most universal by way of justice, and the most comprehensive with regard to the agreement among those under you, because the disagreement of the common people sweeps away the arguments of the chiefs while the disagreement of the chiefs can be disregarded when compared with the agreement of the common people.

No one among those under you is more burdensome to the ruler in times of ease, less helpful in distress, more disliking of equitable treatment, more importunate in asking favors, less thankful when given (anything), less appreciative

of reasons at the time of refusal, and weaker in endurance at the time of the discomforts of life than the chiefs. It is the common people of the community who are the pillars of the religion, the power of the Muslims and the defence against the enemies. Your leanings should therefore be towards them and your inclination with them.

The one among the people under you who is furthest from you and the worst of them in your view should be he who is the most inquisitive of the shortcomings of the people, because people do have shortcomings and the ruler is the most appropriate person to cover them. Do not disclose whatever of it is hidden from you because your obligation is to correct what is manifest to you, while Allah will deal with whatever is hidden from you. Therefore, cover shortcomings so far as you

can; Allah would cover those of your shortcomings which you would like to remain under cover from your subjects. Unfasten every knot of hatred in the people and cut away from yourself the cause of every enmity. Feign ignorance from what is not clear to you. Do not hasten to second a backbiter, because a backbiter is a cheat although he looks like those who wish well.

About Counselors

Do not include among those you consult a miser who would keep you back from being generous and caution you against destitution, nor a coward who would make you feel too weak for your affairs, nor a greedy person who would make beautiful to you the collection of wealth by evil ways. This is because miserliness, cowardice and greed are different qualities that an unfavourable opinion of Allah brings together.

The worst minister for you is he who has been a minister for mischievous persons before you, and who joined them in sins. Therefore, he should not be your chief man, because they are abettors of sinners and brothers of the oppressors. You can find good substitutes for them who will be

like them in their views and influence, while not being like them in sins and vices. They have never assisted an oppressor in his oppression or a sinner in his sin. They will give you the least trouble and the best support. They will be most considerate towards you and the least inclined towards others. Therefore, make them your chief companions in privacy as well as in public.

Then, more preferable among them for you should be those who openly speak better truths before you and who support you least in those of your actions which Allah does not approve in His friends, even though they may be according to your wishes. Associate yourself with God-fearing and truthful people; then educate them, so that they should not praise you or please you by reason of an action you did not perform, because an excess of

praise produces pride and drives you near haughtiness.

The virtuous and the vicious should not be in equal position before you because this means dissuasion of the virtuous from virtue and persuasion of the vicious to vice. Keep everyone in the position which is his. You should know that the most conducive thing for the good impression of the ruler on his subjects is that he should extend good behavior towards them, lighten their hardships, and avoid putting them to unbearable troubles.

You should therefore, in this way follow a course by which you will leave a good impression with your subjects, because such good ideas will relieve you of great worries. Certainly, the one most entitled to have a favorable impression of you

is he whom you have treated well, and the one most entitled to have a bad opinion of you is he whom you have treated badly.

Do not discontinue the good practices which the earlier people of this community had acted upon, by virtue of which there was general unity and through which the subjects prospered. Do not innovate any line of action which injures these earlier practices because (in that case) the reward for those who had established those practices will continue, but the burden for discontinuing them will be on you. Keep on increasing your conversations with the scholars and discussions with the wise to stabilize the prosperity of the areas under you, and to continue with that in which your predecessors had established.

The Different Classes of People

Know that the people consist of classes who prosper only with the help of one another, and they are not independent of one another. Among them are the army of Allah, then the secretarial workers of the common people and the chiefs, then the dispensers of justice, then those engaged in law and order, then the payers of head tax (jizyah) and land tax (khiraaj) from the protected unbelievers and the common Muslims, then there are the traders and the men of industry and then the lowest class of the needy and the destitute. Allah has fixed the share of every one of them and laid down His precepts about the limits of each in His Book (Qur'an) and the sunnah of His Prophet by way of a settlement which is preserved with us.

Now the army is, by the will of Allah, the fortress of the subjects, the ornament of the ruler, the strength of the religion and the means of peace. The subjects cannot exist without them while the army can be maintained only by the funds fixed by Allah in the revenues, through which they acquire the strength to fight the enemies, on which they depend for their prosperity, and with which they meet their needs. These two classes cannot exist without the third class namely the judges, the executives and the secretaries who pass judgment about contracts, collect revenues and are depended upon in special and general matters.

And these classes cannot exist except with the traders and men of industry, who provide necessities for them, establish markets and make it possible for others not to do all this with their own

hands. Then is the lowest class of the needy and the destitute support of and help for whom is an obligation, and everyone of them has (a share in) livelihood in the name of Allah. Everyone of them has a right on the ruler according to what is needed for his prosperity. The ruler cannot acquit himself of the obligations laid on him by Allah in this matter except by striving and seeking help from Allah and by training himself to adhere to the right and by enduring on that account all that is light or hard.

1. The Army

Put in command of your forces the man who in your view is the best well - wisher of Allah, His Prophet and your Imam. The chestiest of them in heart and the highest of them in endurance is he who is slow in getting enraged, accepts excuses, is

kind to the weak and is strict with the strong; violence should not raise his temper and weakness should not keep him sitting.

Also associate with considerate people from high families, virtuous houses and decent traditions, then people of courage, valor, generosity and benevolence, because they are repositories of honor and springs of virtues. Strive for their matters as the parents strive for their child. Do not regard anything that you do to strengthen them as big nor consider anything that you have agreed to do for them as little (so as to give it up), even though it may be small, because this will make them your well-wishers and create a good impression of you. Do not neglect to attend to their small matters, confining yourself to their important matters, because your small favors will also be of

benefit to them while the important ones are such that they cannot ignore them.

That commander of the army should have such a position before you that he renders help to them equitably and spends from his money on them and on those of their families who remain behind so that all their worries converge on the one worry for fighting the enemy. Your kindness to them will turn their hearts to you. The most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas and the manifestation of the love of their subjects, but the subjects' love manifests itself only when their hearts are clean. Their good wishes prove correct only when they surround their commanders (to protect them). Do not regard their positions to be a burden over them and do not keep watching for the end of their

tenure. Therefore, be broad-minded in regard to their desires, continue praising them and recounting the good deeds of those who have shown such deeds, because the mention of good actions shakes the brave and rouses the weak, if Allah so wills.

Appreciate the performance of every one of them, do not attribute the performance of one to the other, and do not minimize the reward below the level of the performance. The high position of a man should not lead you to regard his small deeds as big, nor should the low position of a man make you regard his big deeds as small.

Refer to Allah and His Prophet the affairs which worry you and matters which appear confusing to you, because, addressing the people whom Allah the Sublime, wishes to guide, He said:

"O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those vested with authority from among you: and then if you quarrel about anything refer it to Allah and the Prophet if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day (of Judgment)". (Qur'an, 4:59)

Referring to Allah means to act according to what is clear in His Book and referring to the Prophet means to follow his unanimously agreed Sunnah in regard to which there are no differences.

2. The Chief Judge

For the settlement of disputes among people select him who is the most distinguished of your subjects in your view. The cases (coming before him) should not vex him, disputation should not enrage him, he should not insist on any wrong

point, and should not grudge accepting the truth when he perceives it; ***he should not lean towards greed and should not content himself with a cursory understanding (of a matter) without going thoroughly into it.***

He should be most ready to stop (to ponder) on doubtful points, most regardful of arguments, least disgusted at the quarrel of litigants, most patient at probing into matters and most fearless at the time of passing judgment. Praise should not make him vain and elation should not make him lean (to any side). Such people are very few.

Then, very often check his decisions and allow him so much money (as remuneration) that he has no excuse worth hearing (for not being honest) and there remains no occasion for

him to go to others for his needs. Give him that rank in your audience for which no one else among your chiefs aspires, so that he remains safe from the harm of those around you. ***You should have a piercing eye in this matter because this religion has formerly been a prisoner in the hands of vicious persons when action was taken according to passion, and worldly wealth was sought.***

3. Executive Officers

Thereafter, look into the affairs of your executives. Give them appointment after tests and do not appoint them according to partiality or favoritism, because these two things constitute sources of injustice and unfairness. Select from among them those who are people of experience and modesty, hailing from virtuous houses, having

been previously in Islam, because such persons possess high manners and untarnished honor. They are the least inclined towards greed and always have their eyes on the ends of matters.

Give them an abundant livelihood (by way of salary) because this gives them the strength to maintain themselves in order and not to have an eye upon the funds in their custody, and it would be an argument against them if they disobeyed your orders or misappropriated your trust. You should also check their activities and have people who report on them who should be truthful and faithful, because you are watching their actions secretly will urge them to preserve trust with and to be kind to the people. Be careful of assistants. If any one of them extends his hands towards misappropriation and the reports of your reporters

reaching you confirm it, that should be regarded enough evidence. You should then inflict corporal punishment on him and recover what he has misappropriated. You should put him in a place of disgrace, blacklist him with (the charge of) misappropriation and make him wear the necklace of shame for his offence.

4.The Administration of Revenues

Look after the revenue (khiraaj or land tax) affairs in such a way that those engaged in it remain prosperous because in their prosperity lies the prosperity of all others. The others cannot prosper without them, because all people are dependent on revenue and its payers. You should also keep an eye on the cultivation of the land more than on the collection of revenue because revenue cannot

be had without cultivation and whoever asks for revenue without cultivation, ruins the area and brings death to the people. His rule will not last only a moment.

If they complain of the heaviness (of the revenue) or of diseases, or dearth of water, or excess of water or of a change in the condition of the land either due to flood or to drought, you should remit the revenue to the extent that you hope will improve their position. The remission granted by you for the removal of distress from them should not be grudged by you, because it is an investment which they will return to you in the shape of the prosperity of your country and the progress of your domain in

addition to earning their praise and happiness for meeting out justice to them.

You can depend upon their strength because of the investment made by you in them through catering to their convenience, and can have confidence in them because of the justice extended to them by being kind to them. After that, circumstances may so turn that you may have to ask for their assistance, when they will bear it happily, for prosperity is capable of hearing whatever you load on it. The ruin of the land is caused hy the poverty of the cultivators, while the cultivators become poor when the officers concentrate on the collection (of money), having little hope for continuance (in their posts) and deriving no benefit from objects of warning.

5.The Clerical Establishment

Then you should take care of your secretarial workers. Put the best of them in charge of your affairs. Entrust those of your letters which contain your policies and secrets to him who possesses the best character, who is not elated by honors, lest he dares speak against you in common audiences. He should also not be negligent in presenting the communications of your officers before you and issuing correct replies to them on your behalf and in matters of your receipts and payments. He should not make any damaging agreement on your behalf and should not fail in repudiating an agreement against you. He should not be ignorant of the extent of his own position in matters because he who is ignorant of his own position is (even) more ignorant of the position of others.

Your selection of these people should not be on the basis of your understanding (of them), confidence and your good impression, because people catch the ideas of the officers through affectation and personal service and there is nothing in it which is like well-wishing or trustfulness. You should rather test them by what they did under the virtuous people before you. Take a decision in favor of one who has a good name among the common people and is the most renowned in trustworthiness, because this will be a proof of your regard for Allah and for him on whose behalf you have been appointed to this position (namely your Imam). Establish one chief for every department of work. He should not be incapable of big matters, and a rush of work should not perplex him. Whenever there is a defect in your

secretaries which you overlook, then you will be held responsible for it.

6. Traders and Industrialists

Now take some advice about traders and industrialists. Give them good counsel whether they be settled (shop-keepers) or traders or physical labourers because they are sources of profit and the means of the provision of useful articles. They bring them from distant and far-flung areas throughout the land and sea, plains or mountains, from where people cannot come and to where they do not dare to go, for they are peaceful and there is no fear of revolt from them, and they are quite without fear of treason.

Look after their affairs before yourself or wherever they may be in your area. Know, along

with this, that most of them are very narrow-minded, and awfully avaricious. They hoard goods for profiteering and fix high prices for goods. This is a source of harm to the people and a blot on the officers in charge. Stop people from hoarding, because the Messenger of Allah (S) has prohibited it. The sale should be smooth, with correct weights and prices, not harmful to either party, the seller or the purchaser; whoever commits hoarding after you prohibit it, give him exemplary but not excessive punishment.

7. The Lowest Class

(Fear) Allah and keep Allah in view in respect of the lowest class, consisting of those who have few means: the poor, the destitute, the penniless and the disabled; because in this class are both the self- contained needy and those who beg.

Take care for the sake of Allah of His obligations towards them for which He has made you responsible. Fix for them a share from the public funds and a share from the crops of lands taken over as booty for Islam in every area, because in it the remote ones have the same shares as the near ones. All these people are those whose rights have been placed in your charge. Therefore, a luxurious life should not keep you away from them You cannot be excused for ignoring small matters because you were deciding big problems. Consequently, do not be unmindful of them, nor turn your face from them out of vanity.

Take care of the affairs of those of them who do not approach you among those who are looked at with contempt and whom people regard as low. Appoint for them some trusted people who

are God-fearing and humble. They should inform you of these people's conditions. Then deal with them with a sense of responsibility to Allah on the day you will meet Him, because of all the subjects these people are the most deserving of equitable treatment, while for others also you should fulfill their rights so as to render account to Allah.

Take care of the orphans and the aged who have no means (for livelihood) nor are they ready for begging. This is heavy on the officers; in fact, every right is heavy. Allah lightens it for those who seek the next world and so they endure (hardships) upon themselves and trust on the truthfulness of Allah's promise to them. And fix a time for complainants wherein you make yourself free for them, and sit for them in common audience and feel humble therein for the sake of Allah who

created you. (On that occasion) you should keep away your army and your assistants such as the guards and the police so that anyone who like to speak may speak to you without fear, because I have heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say in more than one place, ***"The people among whom the right of the weak is not secured from the strong without fear will never achieve purity."*** Tolerate their awkwardness and inability to speak. Keep away from you narrowness and haughtiness; Allah would, on this account, spread over you the skirts of His mercy and assign the reward of His obedience for you. Whatever you give, give it joyfully, but when you refuse, do it handsomely and with excuses.

Then there are certain matters which you cannot avoid performing yourself. For example,

replying to your officers when your secretaries are unable to do so, or disposing of the complaints of the people when your assistants shirk them. Finish every day the work meant for it, because every day has its own work. Keep for yourself the better and greater portion of these periods for the worship of Allah, although all these items are for Allah provided the intention is pure and the subjects prosper there by.

Communion with Allah

The particular thing by which you should purify your religion for Allah should be the fulfillment of those obligations which are especially for Him. Therefore, devote to Allah some of your physical activity during the night and the day, and whatever (worship) you perform for seeking nearness to Allah should be complete, without defect or deficiency, whatsoever physical exertion it may involve. When you lead the prayers for the people, then do not scare them away from it (by prolonging it) nor waste it (by making it too short), because among the people there are the sick as well as those who have needs of their own. When the Messenger of Allah

(S) sent me to Yemen I enquired how I should offer prayers with them and he replied: ***"Say the prayers as the weakest of them would say, and be compassionate to the believers."***

On the Behavior and Action of a Ruler

Then, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for a long time, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a kind of narrow-sightedness and causes ignorance about their affairs. Seclusion from them also prevents them from the knowledge of those things which they do not know and as a result they begin to regard big matters as small and small matters as big, good matters as bad and bad matters as good, while the truth becomes confused with falsehood. After all, a governor is a human being and cannot have knowledge of things which people keep hidden from him.

There are no marks on the face of truth to differentiate its various expressions from falsehood. Then you can be one of two kinds of men. Either you may be generous in granting rights and then why this hiding in spite of (your) discharging the obligations and good acts that you perform? Or you are a victim of stinginess; in that case people will soon give up asking you since they will lose hope of generous treatment from you. In spite of that there are many needs of the people towards you which do not involve any hardship on you, such as the complaint against oppression or the request for justice in a matter.

Further, a governor has favorites and people of easy access to him. They misappropriate things, are high-handed and do not observe justice in matters. You should destroy the root of evil in

the people by cutting away the causes of these defects. Do not make any land grants to your hangers on or supporters. They should not expect from you the possession of land which may cause harm to adjoining people over the question of irrigation or common services whose burden the grantees place on others. In this way, the benefit will be rather theirs than yours, and the blame will lie on you in this world and the next.

Allow rights to whomsoever it is due, whether near you or far from you. In this matter, you should be enduring and watchful even though it may involve your relations and favorites, and keep in view the reward of that which appears burdensome on you because its reward is handsome.

If the subjects suspect you of high-handedness, explain to them your position openly and remove their suspicion with your explanation, because this would mean exercise for your soul and consideration to the subjects while this explanation will secure your aim of keeping them firm in truth.

Do not reject peace to which your enemy may call you and wherein there is the pleasure of Allah, because peace brings rest to your army and relief from your worries and safety for your country. But after peace there is great apprehension from the enemy because often the enemy offers peace to benefit by your negligence. Therefore, be cautious and do not act by wishfulness in this matter.

If you conclude an agreement between yourself and your enemy or enter into a pledge

with him then fulfill your agreement and discharge your pledge faithfully. Place yourself as a shield against whatever you have pledged because among the obligations of Allah there is nothing on which people are more strongly united despite the difference of their ideas and variation of their views than respect for fulfilling pledges.

Besides Muslims, even unbelievers have abided by agreements because they realized the dangers which would come in the wake of violation (thereof). Therefore, do not deceive your enemy, because no one can offend Allah save the ignorant and the wicked. Allah made His agreement and pledged the sign of security which He has spread over His creatures through His mercy and an asylum in which they stay in His protection and seek the benefit of nearness to

Him. Therefore, there should be no deceit, cunning or duplicity in it.

Do not enter into an agreement which may admit of different interpretations and do not change the interpretation of vague words after the conclusion and confirmation (of the agreement). If an agreement of Allah involves you in hardship do not seek its repudiation without justification, because the bearing of hardships through which you expect relief and a handsome result is better than a violation whose consequence you fear, and that you fear that you will be called upon by Allah to account for it and you will not be able to seek forgiveness for it in this world or the next.

You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting of Divine retribution, greater in (evil) consequence,

and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short of life than the shedding of blood without justification. On the Day of Judgment Allah the Glorified, would commence giving His judgment among the people with the cases of bloodshed committed by them.

Therefore, do not strengthen your authority by shedding prohibited blood because this will weaken and lower the authority, moreover destroy it and shift it. You cannot offer any excuse before Allah or before me for willful killing because there must be the question or revenge in it. If you are involved in it by error and you exceed in the use of your whip or sword or hand in inflicting punishment, as sometimes even a blow by the fist or a smaller stroke causes death, then the haughtiness of your authority should not prevent

you from paying the blood price to the successors of the killed person.

You should avoid self-admiration, having reliance in what appears good in yourself and love of exaggerated praise because this is one of the most reliable opportunities for Satan to obliterate the good deeds of the virtuous.

Avoid showing (the existence of) obligation on your subjects for having done good to them or praising your own actions or making promises and then breaking them, because showing (the existence of) obligation destroys good, self-praise takes away the light of truth, and breaking promises earns the hatred of Allah and of the people. Allah, the Glorified, says:

Most hateful is it unto Allah that you say what you (yourselves) do (it) not. (Qur'an, 61:3)

Avoid haste in matters before their time, slowness at their proper time, insistence on them when the propriety of action is not known or weakens when it becomes clear. Assign every matter its proper place and do every job at the appropriate time.

Do not appropriate to yourself that in which the people have an equal share, nor be regardless of matters which have come to light with the excuse that you are accountable for others. Shortly, the curtains of all matters will be raised from your view and you will be required to render redress to the oppressed. Have control over (your) sense of prestige, any outburst of anger, the might of your arm and the sharpness of your tongue. Guard

against all this by avoiding haste and by delaying severe action till your anger subsides and you regain your self-control. You cannot withhold yourself from this unless you bear in mind that you have to return to Allah.

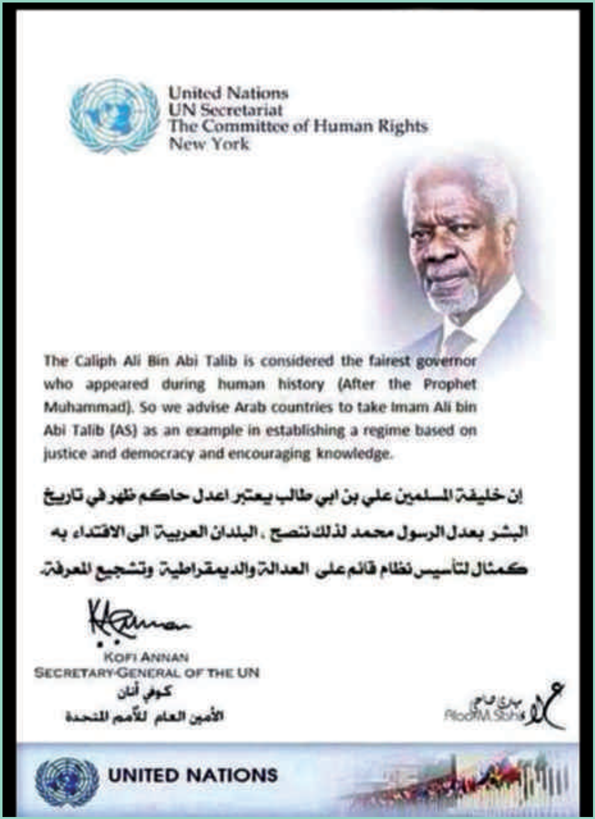
It is necessary for you to recall how matters went with those who preceded you, be it a government or a great tradition or a precedent of our Prophet (may Allah bless him and his descendants) or the obligatory commands contained in the Book of Allah. Then you should follow them as you have seen us acting upon them and should exert yourself in following that I have enjoined upon you in this document in which I have exhausted my pleas on you, so that if your heart advances towards its passions you may have no plea in its support.

None will protect from evil or grant success for good but Allah, the Exalted. Among the matters that Messenger of Allah, peace be on him, enjoined on me in his testament were the exhortation to prayer and zakaat and (taking care of) the slaves. With that I end my document to you, and there is no strength or power but with Allah, the All-mighty.

I ask Allah through the vastness of His mercy and the greatness of His power of giving a good inclination that He may prompt me and you to advance a clear plea before Him and His creatures in a manner that may attract His pleasure along with handsome praise among the people, good effect in the country, an increase in prosperity and a heightening of honor; and that He may allow me and you to die a death of virtue and

martyrdom. Surely, we have to return to Him. Peace be on the Messenger of Allah may Allah shower His blessings and plentiful salutations on him and his pure and chaste descendants; and that is an end to the matter.

(Nahjul Balagha, Letter No. 53)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The Caliph Ali Bin Abi Talib is considered the fairest governor who appeared during human history (After the Prophet Muhammad). So we advise Arab countries to take Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (AS) as an example in establishing a regime based on justice and democracy and encouraging knowledge.

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